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ABSTRACT

This brochure highlights national policies, successful initiatives, and effective programs administered by the United States Department of Education to improve the lives of women and girls through education, training, and research. There are five sections to the brochure: (1) "Advancing Women and Girls Through Education" including enforcing federal laws that prohibit discrimination, addressing the special needs of women and girls in educational programs, and providing technical assistance to states and local school systems; (2) "Creating an Environment for Success in Education"; (3) "Implementing Goals for a New Era"; (4) "Supporting Education for Women and Girls" including research and dissemination, women's pursuit of higher education, and preparation for nontraditional careers; and (5) "Sharing Resources for Educating Women and Girls." (EH)

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ED 396 992

Women & Girls in Education: What's Working in the U.S.

Ten Years of Advancement 1985-95

U.S. Department of Education

Level 1

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TEN YEARS OF ADVANCEMENT 1985-95

WOMEN & GIRLS IN EDUCATION

What's Working in the U.S.

(cover -- 55,172 bytes)

FOREWORD

We extend our greetings to all delegations and participants who are assembling in Beijing and in your own communities to improve the condition of women worldwide by the Year 2000.

With your cooperation, the UN Commission on the Status of Women has offered exemplary leadership in this worldwide effort to improve the condition of women and girls. During this decade the Commission involved millions of men and women in pursuit of *equality, development, and peace* with particular emphasis on achieving equality between men and women in decision making; equal access to resources for human development -- particularly education; and achieving worldwide peace by the Year 2000.

A key pursuit of the United States is to maintain our democracy and help all of the American people make the most of their own lives. This brochure highlights national policies, successful initiatives and effective programs administered by the United States Department of Education to improve conditions for women and girls through education, training and research.

Many of the policies and programs in education that advance the status of women were established by legislation to eliminate discrimination against women in the United States. Some of these programs reflect nationwide efforts to advance the status of women in the United States. Other initiatives promote local activities that encourage women and girls of every age and background to complete education and training which will lead to productive citizenship and economic independence.

The United States Department of Education looks forward to working with you to advance the status of women and girls, especially in the fields of science, technology, and mathematics. Access to education has proven to be the most effective means for women and girls to escape the limitations of discrimination and reach their full potential. We are convinced that expanding education for women and girls worldwide will be a powerful and liberating force for achieving the shared goals of *equality, development and peace* by the Year 2000.

Richard W. Riley

Richard W. Riley
Secretary of Education

Madeleine M. Kunin
Deputy Secretary of Education

ADVANCING WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH EDUCATION

Today, more than half of the population of the United States is female. Women are assuming greater leadership and decision-making roles in our families, communities, and every sector of the workforce, including national, state and local governments.

Education has been the foundation on which Americans rely to become productive and economically independent citizens, able parents, leaders and full participants in a racially and culturally diverse society. It is vital to the future growth of our nation that women and girls have equal educational opportunity and share equally in the benefits of education.

Education is primarily a state and local responsibility, and improving the quality of education is a national priority. The federal government is an active partner with states, local education agencies, community and nonprofit organizations, and others in promoting education for all learners.

CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCESS IN EDUCATION

The United States has encouraged an educational environment in which the contributions and accomplishments of individuals are recognized and appreciated regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age, or economic status. Americans have been successful in identifying and eliminating many overt barriers that impede women and girls from participating equally in the educational system by:

- enforcing federal laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, and disability;
- encouraging the inclusion of strategies that address the special needs of women and girls, individuals with disabilities, and individuals of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in federally supported educational programs;
- providing technical assistance to states, local elementary and secondary school systems, institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, individuals, and families in the operation of federally supported programs; and

- supporting applied research and disseminating information about practical solutions.

Because of these national strategies, significant improvements were made during the last decade in providing access to education and training programs that affect the lives of women and girls. However, more remains to be done.

IMPLEMENTING GOALS FOR A NEW ERA

In the last few years, the United States took bold steps to strengthen and improve education outcomes for students at all levels of education, including individuals with disabilities, and individuals of diverse economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Key to this effort is the implementation of a set of national education goals adopted by the United States in 1994 through the **GOALS 2000: Educate America Act:**

- All children in America will start school ready to learn.
- The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
- All students will have demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter by the time they leave high school.
- United States students will excel in mathematics and science.
- Every adult American will be literate and possess the knowledge and skills to compete in a global economy.
- Every school in the United States will be safe, disciplined, and alcohol- and drug-free.
- The nation's teachers will have access to programs to improve their professional skills.
- Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental participation.

Guided by these goals, the United States will continue to promote and advance the education of women and girls at all levels through a variety of means such as safer schools, better discipline, higher academic standards, improved teaching, greater family involvement, improved access to college, and community-based solutions to educational improvement.

SUPPORTING EDUCATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Research and Dissemination

Federal support for research and information dissemination is an important resource for educators throughout the United States. By sharing information about model programs and practices that promote equity in education, including equal access for individuals with disabilities to the education and economic systems, the federal government provides practical services to state and local education agencies.

For example, at a federally sponsored research and training center, staff survey the problems women with disabilities encounter in rearing children, and develop and disseminate solutions, which may include providing education and health training, developing adaptive parenting technology, and assisting these women with lifelong planning.

The federal government also supports statistical analyses, research, studies, and evaluations to increase understanding of equity issues in education. The findings and recommendations from the research are disseminated through publications as well as through federally funded programs such as the **Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) Program** and the **Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) System**.

Educating the Girl Child

Supporting systemwide education reform at the state and local levels is a key goal of the federal government. Improving teaching practices to address the diverse learning needs of every student, giving every child the opportunity to tackle challenging assignments in all subject matter -- regardless of gender, race, disability, socioeconomic background, or native language -- and helping students stay in school, are all essential to this process. The following are examples of initiatives supported by the federal government:

- Teachers are provided with strategies to help improve student performance and to create an environment for high achievement for every child through the **Eisenhower Professional Development Program** and the **WEEA Program**, as well as through other federal programs. Recognizing that teaching practices are not always gender equitable, these programs promote instruction in gender-equitable methods and techniques; the elimination of gender bias in instructional materials; strategies to encourage girls and women to take advanced courses in mathematics and science; and activities to increase the number of women in school administration.

- Girls and boys are learning to treat each other equally and to appreciate the many different cultures in the United States. For example, through "A-Gay-Yah," a project funded by a **WEEA** grant, middle school students are exposed to critical thinking, cooperative learning, and the study of complex issues of gender and race equity within the context of Native American history and culture. "A-Gay-Yah" is being used in many schools throughout the country.

- Realizing the need for dropout prevention, drug intervention, and a safer climate for young girls who are at risk of leaving school, school administrators in one state created the Tender Loving Care-Think and Try (TLC-TNT) Program, which includes a transition and independent study program during the school year and a summer day camp. The transition program provides high school or college-aged mentors to eighth-graders, and the independent study program allows participants the opportunity to work in school offices and in community centers and local parks after school.

- Because of the high cost of educating children with disabilities, even when done in integrated settings with all children, the federal government assists states in providing free appropriate public education. The federal government also pays a portion of the costs and monitors the results.

Women's Pursuit of Higher Education

The increase in female graduates from colleges and graduate schools is a significant accomplishment for the United States. The federal government provides financial assistance for higher education through grants and loans to students, and through programs that provide unique opportunities for women.

- Under the **Federal Direct Loan Program**, students borrow money from the federal government to make college more affordable. Through new Individual Education Accounts, students can borrow money for college and develop a plan to repay the loan based on their financial situation and work-life changes. This program has major benefits for individuals pursuing college, particularly young women rearing children while in school.

- Life sometimes presents women with unexpected challenges that may throw them temporarily off course. **TRIO** programs are developed specifically for individuals who otherwise would not attend college for a variety of reasons. Through programs like **TRIO**, such women are able to begin anew by attending a four-year university. For example, for a divorced mother of eight children who was a high school drop-out, a **TRIO** program provided funds and counseling, and helped her to maximize her talents through participation in university organizations. As a result, she received a bachelor's degree in English and speech and then pursued a master's degree.

Preparation for Nontraditional Careers

The federal government invests in state and local governments and works with industry to develop new strategies to encourage women and girls to participate in education and training programs that result in higher paying jobs with growth potential. Federally supported vocational education programs and programs supported under the **School-to-Work Opportunities Act** help to increase employment opportunities for women and girls, particularly in new and emerging occupations. For example:

- Young women of diverse backgrounds pursuing career paths in the nontraditional areas of engineering and science are strongly supported by School-to-Work systems. Students are linked with women engineers and scientists who can serve as role models, and matched with mentors sharing the same gender, ethnicity, and career path. They also receive special training in how to enter nontraditional employment and develop support networks and mentors in the workplace.

- Young women train to become laboratory technicians, computer analysts, medical assistants, and professionals in other technical fields through "cooperative ventures" supported by federal funds. State and local education agencies are encouraged to develop and implement strategies that advance women in vocational education and training.

Family Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Cooperative arrangements between schools and families of the children they teach are also a vital

resource for improving literacy and basic education skills for women and girls. Some literacy programs allow parents and their children to learn together. When these programs emphasize collaborative efforts with other community, educational, and social service agencies the benefits to both the parent and the child increase. Family literacy projects supported by the **Even Start Program**, the **Parental Assistance Program**, and the **Adult Education Act** help to break the cycle of intergenerational illiteracy. For example:

- At one family literacy site, children develop academic and social skills while parents learn to read in a familiar environment. At the same site, the "Well Mobile" provides preventive health care and referral services.
- Parents and children have the opportunity to learn together where they live, because of a cooperative agreement among the family literacy program, a public librarian who provides books for both parents and children, and the owner of an apartment complex. A classroom, health services, and a licensed child care facility are all located on the premises of the apartment complex.
- Family centers, funded jointly by federal and local funds, assist parents of children with disabilities and their schools in forming helpful and cooperative relationships in the areas of education, vocations, and socialization. These centers are located throughout the United States.

SHARING RESOURCES FOR EDUCATING WOMEN AND GIRLS

The federal government provides information on high quality resources to organizations and individuals interested in promoting equity in the United States and around the world. Information on a wide variety of topics dealing with the education of women and girls can be accessed through the Internet, or the products may be ordered from a central distributor such as the WEEA Publishing Center or the ERIC system.

ERIC is the largest education database. It contains approximately 800,000 abstracts, including digests, research reports, and curriculum materials. Paper or microfiche documents are available from the ERIC system, which can be searched via Internet or at about 3,000 locations around the world using CD-ROM or other computer networks.

Publicly accessible electronic forums on the Internet provide ameans of communication among groups of individuals who subscribe (often for free) to participate in discussions and to exchange information on resources related to their interests. Some of these discussion lists maintain related databases. For example, the Women's Studies List keeps an updated file of gender-related electronic forums both in, and outside of, education.

Suggestions for Using Internet

- Use terms like "girls," "women," "women's studies," "gender equity," "sex discrimination," and

"education" to search the Internet Gopher and World Wide Web sites.

- To learn more about the U.S. Department of Education, to obtain copies of ERIC digests, to retrieve the most recent catalog from the WEEA Publishing Center, and to search the ERIC database, use the U.S. Department of Education's Internet address: gopher.ed.gov; or you may select North America USA General U.S. Department of Education. The World Wide Web server can be accessed at URL (Uniform Resource Locator) http://www.ed.gov/

- To join free discussion forums contact:

EDEQUITY, an international theory and practice discussion list on issues of gender equity in a multi-cultural context in schools, colleges, and other educational sites.

To subscribe, send an E-mail message to MAJORDOMO@CONFER.EDC.ORG In the body of the message type: subscribe edequity your first name and your last name (avoid the use of a signature block, and leave the subject line blank).

Women's Studies (WMST-L), an international list for students, teachers, and researchers studying women and gender issues, particularly in higher education.

To subscribe, send an E-mail message to LISTSERV@UMDD.UMD.EDU (Internet) or LISTSERV@UMDD (Bitnet). In the body of the message type: subscribe WMST-L your first name and your last name (avoid the use of a signature block, and leave the subject line blank).

Other Information Sources

- Information Resource Center, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20202, Tel. 1-800-USA-LEARN (202- 401-2000), Fax 202-401-0954

- Federal Direct Loan Program, 1-800-848-0982

- School-to-Work Office, 202-401-6222

- ACCESS ERIC, 1600 Research Boulevard, Rockville, MD 20850-3172, Tel. 1-800 LET-ERIC (301-538-3742), Fax 301-309-2084, Internet: aspensys3.aspensys.com:70/11/education/eric, or URL http://www.aspensys.com/eric2/welcome.html; or to ask substantive questions try askeric@ericir.syr.edu

- WEEA Publishing Center, Educational Development Center, Inc., 55 Chapel Street, Suite 200, Newton, MA 02158-1060, Tel. 1-800-225-3088, Fax 617- 332-4318, Internet: weeapub@edc.org

- National Rehabilitation Information Center (for information on special education and rehabilitation as well as assistive technology), 8455 Colesville Road, Suite 935, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3319, Tel. 1-800-346- 2722 (V/TT), Fax 301-587-1967, Internet: naric@cap.gwu.edu

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